

NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

IN CHARGE OF

ELIZABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL



THE WINDING-SHEET OF CHRIST.—The *Medical Record* says the Paris correspondent of the *Lancet* writes that M. Vignon recently read a most interesting paper before the Academy of Sciences and exhibited some photographs which he had taken of the winding-sheet preserved at Turin and traditionally said to be that of Christ. This winding-sheet has on it certain markings printed in a brown color which, when photographed, gave a white imprint, as does a negative when printed from. These markings therefore act as a true negative, and M. Vignon has shown by certain very careful experiments that cloth impregnated with oil and aloes, as was the winding-sheet in question, will receive an impression when in contact with ammoniacal vapors such as would be given off from a sweat very rich in urea, as is the case in the sweat of a person dying a lingering and painful death. Any idea of fraud need not be considered, for no one has touched this winding-sheet since 1353, and no painter at that date had the skill to reproduce such an exact drawing. The impression of the head is excellent. The wounds produced by the crown of thorns and the marks of the blood-drops are quite obvious. The wound in the side and even the marks of the stripes on the back produced by the flagellation are also quite evident. Each of these stripes has at its end an enlargement such as would be produced by a cord with a ball of lead at the end. It is well-known that this form of scourge was employed by the Roman soldiers, and such a one was found at Pompeii. Finally the marks of the nails in the arms are not in the palm of the hand, but show that the nails were driven through at the level of the wrist. M. Vignon's paper has created an extreme interest in the scientific and religious worlds.

EXPERIMENTS ON DISINFECTION.—The *Philadelphia Medical Journal* says experiments have recently been undertaken upon disinfectants for the London County Council. According to the summary presented by the council's medical officer typhoid bacilli were destroyed by carbolic acid (1 to 5), by potassium permanganate and bichloride (1 to 1000), and by formalin and sulphur dioxide. Anthrax bacilli and spores were only destroyed by bichloride of mercury, and this with carbolic acid alone killed tubercle bacilli. It should be noted that neither formalin nor sulphur dioxide gave satisfactory results in the disinfection of wood or cloth containing tubercle bacilli.

THE VERMIFORM APPENDIX A GLAND.—Dr. Clarence L. Kilowen has a paper in the *Philadelphia Medical Journal* on the probability of the vermiform appendix being a gland whose office may be to neutralize the products of microbic fermentation in the large intestine and prevent the poisoning of the system by them. The tonsils have to a certain extent the power of destroying germs and so protect the pharynx, and the appendix, being similar to them in structure, may have the same power in its own part of the body. He does not think that this view of its office should prevent its being removed when diseased.

HYPNOTISM AND THE MORPHINE HABIT.—Dr. Sigmund A. Agatston in the *New York Medical Journal* reports the case of a woman who was in the habit of taking twenty-five grains of morphine in twenty-four hours. This was gradually withdrawn in three weeks, the withdrawal being accompanied by intense suffering, vomiting, diarrhœa, colic, insomnia, and restlessness, nearly unsettling her mind. Hypnotism was suggested after the failure of antipyrine, hyoscine, hydrobromate, belladonna, sulphonal, trional, aromatic sulphuric acid, etc., to give relief. It relieved the sleeplessness, though in the waking hours she had colic, vomiting, and diarrhœa. She persisted in the treatment and was cured. She now, after the lapse of a year, has no desire for morphia and feels perfectly well.

THE DIGESTIVE VALUE OF PINEAPPLE.—The London *Lancet* says a slice of pineapple after a meal is excellent physiologically, since fresh pineapple-juice contains an active digestive principle, bromelin, similar to pepsin. It will digest as much as a thousand times its weight within a few hours, according to the kind of proteid present. The bromelin is obtained from pineapple-juice by adding salt, which causes its precipitation. It acts in an acid, neutral, or alkaline medium, unlike pepsin. Pineapple also contains much indigestible matter, but the decidedly digestive properties of the juice compensate for this fact.

TREATMENT OF DRUG HABIT WITH HYOSCINE.—Dr. H. A. Hare in the *Medical News* says he has followed Dr. Lott's treatment in the cure of the alcohol and morphine habits in six cases. The patients can take large doses of hyoscine, as much as one-quarter of a grain each day, hypodermically with no ill effects on any vital function. They suffer very slightly, sometimes not at all, from the immediate withdrawal of the morphia. The desire for the drug largely if not altogether disappears in a few days

THE EVIL OF OVER-SUGGESTION TO YOUNG WOMEN.—In an address by J. H. Carstairs, M. D., before the section on obstetrics and diseases of women at the meeting of the American Medical Association the speaker gives some wise advice. He says: "I might call attention to another point that seems to be overlooked and that is the everlasting suggestions to young girls about their pelvic organs. A young girl will grow up, have menstruation established, and have no trouble, but as the result of suggestions from her mother, sisters, or others she may develop trouble: always being asked if she has any pain, and wondering that she has not; asked if she has any discharge, and wondering that she has not; always being asked about the excessive flow. These constant suggestions, this constant calling attention to the womb and ovaries, will make the young girl think about her menstrual function, and a slight deviation from the usual will after a time attract her attention, and she will begin to think about it more. As congestion of any part of the body, say the hand, can be brought about by having the mind dwell upon it, so congestion of the pelvic organs can be brought about by thinking of it, and congestion is only a pre-stage of inflammation and pathological changes.

"With this thinking and worrying about the disturbances we have gynæcologic tinkering, and then we have but one step more to chronic invalidism. It makes my heart ache when I see young girls and women subject to local treatment, injections, supports, etc., for months and years when all they need is a

normal mode of living, proper food, and proper exercise. A little hyper-secretion from the glands of the mucous membrane of the vagina or the uterus does not require local treatment always,—it needs the treatment of the physiologist, that is all. I do not want to derogate proper local examination and treatment in special cases, what I protest against is the zeal with which this is carried on in simple, ordinary cases.

“More physiology is needed. We have all had patients come to us from a distance of hundreds of miles expecting to undergo a serious operation. On examination we find that all they need is to drink three pints of water a day, and with this advice we often send them home disappointed. We have all had patients come to us from a great distance who were suffering from auto-infection, the result of constipation, and who need, instead of an operation, a proper regulation of diet and vigorous abdominal massage.”

ADENOIDS.—The *Medical Record* reports that at the meeting of the American Medical Association Dr. W. Freudenthal, of New York, read a paper on this subject. He said that the main symptom of acute adenoiditis was earache. Frequently the child would fall upon the ear. In his cases there had always been fever, often to a considerable degree. Chronic hypertrophy of the pharyngeal tonsil, generally spoken of as adenoids, was found under all climatic conditions. Catarrhal conditions, tuberculosis, and rheumatism were important etiological factors. The youngest child upon whom he had operated for the removal of adenoids was seven months old, but ordinarily he did not care to do this operation upon children under two years old. Slight hypertrophy did not call for removal. No amount of antiseptics would do good in such operation and often did harm. Syringing the nose before the operation was dangerous. He preferred to operate with the child flat upon the back, chloroform being given cautiously and not pushed to the extent of abolishing the cough reflex. It was not necessary to operate so radically as to remove even the normal adenoid tissue.

UNAPPRECIATED CAUSES OF SOME OF THE ANÆMIAS OF CHILDHOOD.—Dr. Hollopeter, of Philadelphia, in a paper on this subject read at the meeting of the American Medical Association, said that the most important cause of *pnæmia* in childhood and the one best recognized is dental decay. As a result of such neglect the numerous miniature abscesses discharge their contents into the mouth, and this in time leads to gastro-intestinal catarrh and eventually to *anæmia*. It was of the utmost importance to prevent the acute catarrh from becoming chronic, and hence well-nigh incurable. Another unrecognized factor in the production of *anæmia* in childhood was mouth-breathing, and still another was eye-strain.

IMPROVEMENT IN BREAST-MILK.—A paper on this subject was presented by Dr. Thomas S. Southworth, of New York. He said if the breast-milk was scanty or disagreed with the infant, it was fair to assume that the mother was out of health, *anæmic*, or constipated; that she got too little fresh air or exercise; that she took too little fluid of the right kind, or that she was not on a plain, sensible diet. Thirst is no guide to the quantity of fluid a nursing mother should take. Milk was the most important fluid for her to drink, and she should take a quart or more in the twenty-four hours. Thin cornmeal gruel, made of yellow

meal, cooked for a long time and thin enough to be drunk freely, was another useful and most important article of diet, infinitely superior to oatmeal gruel. The nursing mother required on an average at least three quarts of fluid daily. Cocoa made by prolonged boiling of cocoa-nibs, the cracked nut, was an excellent beverage and should be substituted for tea and coffee. Tea should be prohibited. Beer had little nutritive value and often disturbed the child. Anæmia should receive careful consideration; it existed, as a rule, after childbirth. It should be counteracted by Bland's pills and cascara. If with good, regular hours of nursing the infant vomited and had disturbed stools the deduction was that the proteids of the breast-milk were too high. Nothing so effectually corrected this as walking, the distance being increased each day. When it was necessary to build up the mother by iron, fresh air, and exercise the failure of the infant to gain in weight for a time should not cause anxiety if the weight did not diminish. If the child lost weight steadily, supplementary feedings should be given.

TREATMENT OF SCIATICA.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association* quotes the following from one of its foreign exchanges: "Skilful application of the Scottish douche, hot baths, and massage has cured all but one in twenty-four cases of sciatica which Brieger has had occasion to treat. The bath at 100.5° F. should be in a large tub, and many movements which are otherwise painful can be performed in the water, as the heat soothes the aching parts and relaxes the muscles. Massage immediately after the bath is borne much better and the final cure is hastened. One of the three patients treated in his institution was cured in forty-six days after a year of sciatica. All of the cases were extremely severe and had been treated in vain with the entire array of the usual measures."

PREVENTION OF SEA-SICKNESS.—The *Interstate Medical Journal* of St. Louis quotes thus from a German exchange: "C. V. Wild administers orexin tannate for the prevention of sea-sickness as follows: 0.5 grammes (eight grains) are taken in two hundred and fifty cubic centimetres of fluid (such as milk, tea, or bouillon) three hours before the ship sails, and two hours later a plentiful meal is eaten. His observations have brought him to the following conclusions:

"1. That people usually subject to sea-sickness are free from illness at least for several days if the drug is taken exactly in the manner described.

"2. That the sickness is not prevented if the drug is taken in any other manner.

"3. That in one case, while the drug prevented illness on the day of sailing, sea-sickness set in on the following day. He ascribes this ill result to the fact that in this case the meal taken two hours after the administration of the orexin tannate was insufficient."

NURSING IN PRIVATE INSANE ASYLUMS.—In a letter to the *Medical Record* Dr. M. Allen Starr urges the employment of properly trained nurses in private asylums for the care of the insane. He quotes five cases in different asylums near New York in which the patients were placed in charge of absolutely untrained attendants, to their great detriment. He urges that it should be made imperative for asylum physicians to employ trained nurses of good capacity.